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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Fifteenth session
15 January-2 February 1996

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Hanna Beate SCHÖPP-SCHILLING (Germany)

Addendum

IV. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

B. Consideration of reports

2. Initial and second periodic reports

Paraguay

1. The Committee considered the initial and second periodic reports of Paraguay (CEDAW/C/PAR/1-2 and Add.1 and 2) at its 289th and 297th meetings, on 17 and 23 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.289 and 297). The Committee took note of the answers given orally to the wide range of questions and concerns expressed during consideration of the report.

2. In introducing the combined report, the representative of Paraguay noted that since 1992 a number of important political changes had taken place in the country. She emphasized the adoption of a new Constitution and the election of a civilian Government. In 1992, the position of Secretary of State for Women was established.

3. The representative indicated that the promulgation of the new Constitution and the ratification of the relevant international instruments constituted a body of law on equality between women and men. However, she asserted, disparities still remained in certain branches of the law.

4. The representative gave details on several programmes that the Government, non-governmental organizations and women's organizations have been implementing. Despite gains made in women's education, 6 out of 10 illiterate persons in the country were women, mainly from rural areas, and the levels of school retention were very low, especially for girls. The country had one of the highest rates of maternal death in the Latin American region, with abortion being the second most common cause of maternal death.

5. The proportion of women heads of households was very high, she asserted, and those households tended to be among the poorest. There have been some improvements in the granting of loans to women for micro-enterprises, as well as for housing. While segregation of jobs and education was easing and stereotyping in educational materials was being examined, disparities in economic activity and remuneration between women and men were very high. Some measures were introduced to penalize and prevent violence against women as well as to regulate prostitution and to provide education on AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

6. The representative pointed out that one of the most visible changes in the past years has been the participation of women in politics. Several political parties, as well as the Parliament and local authorities, were in the process of introducing quotas for women.

7. The representative stressed that her Government had the conviction that neither development nor democracy were possible without the participation of women.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

8. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with Paraguay's effort in submitting the report and the addenda promptly, which reflected an intention to comply with submission procedures, provide updated information and initiate a dialogue with the Committee which would enable better interpretation of the Convention. The Committee also noted the comprehensive and detailed nature of the oral presentation, which complemented the written reports and answered the questions raised by the experts.

9. Satisfaction was also expressed with the report's frankness, reflecting situations and problems in conflict with the articles of the Convention. The Committee highlighted the scale of the effort represented by submission of the report for a country embarking on a democratic process after a long dictatorship. It welcomed the fact that, apart from the Government, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions had also participated in the report's elaboration.

Factors obstructing implementation of the Convention

10. The Committee recognized that various factors were holding up implementation of the Convention. Particularly relevant were: the country's limited economic capacities, depending on farm production which had only very recently begun to be modernized; high rates of poverty and marginalization among the population; the institutional and cultural consequences of the prolonged dictatorship; and the existence of a very traditional and hierarchical society. Paraguay was currently going through a period of transition, where the new structures of democracy and the rule of law were still being defined, which led to difficulties in applying the policies promoted by the Convention.

Positive aspects

11. The Committee noted that the new Constitution enshrined the principle of equality between men and women, as well as reforms of the Labour and Electoral Codes.

12. The Committee also noted the Government's early recognition of the importance of women for the country's development, and the creation of the Office of the Secretary of State for Women to coordinate official policies for that sector of the population.

13. The Committee further noted the importance attached by the Government to its commitment under the Beijing Platform for Action and, in particular, its initiative to adopt the gender approach in policies and programmes, as well as to heighten the awareness of administrative personnel in that connection.

14. The Committee noted the Government's recognition of the serious problem of violence against women, which had been declared a public health problem.

15. The Committee also noted the level of development of women's organizations and their commitment to the advancement of women.

16. The Committee further noted the initiatives and efforts of both non-governmental organizations and the Government to broaden the political participation of women and the proposal to establish a law on quotas.

Principal subjects of concern

17. The Committee was concerned that the country's legislation maintained discriminatory provisions in conflict with the constitutional principle of equality. Despite the progress made in certain codes, both civil and penal legislation needed major changes to incorporate the rights laid down in the Convention and those emanating from the Constitution.

18. The Committee was concerned by the limited mandate and resources of the Office of the Secretary of State for Women and its apparent lower ranking in the political and administrative hierarchy with respect to other ministries. In that connection, the Committee expressed its surprise that the Secretary of State for Women should be excluded from meetings of the Cabinet of Ministers, which constituted a form of discrimination.

19. The Committee expressed great concern at the high level of maternal mortality - one of the highest in the region - and abortions, especially among very young girls, as well as the high fertility rate and minimal access to basic health and family planning services. It stressed that this situation was particularly serious among rural women, most of whom did not benefit from the right to health guaranteed by the Convention.

20. The Committee acknowledged the State party's initiatives to provide bilingual education but expressed its concern at the inadequacy of those initiatives, which posed a major obstacle to women's access to social and economic opportunities, since a large percentage of the female population spoke only Guarani, the predominant aboriginal language. The high illiteracy and drop-out rates were considered major impediments to the advancement of women.

21. With regard to violence against women, the Committee expressed great concern at the extent of the problem and the inadequacy of legal and administrative measures to combat it, protect victims and punish the perpetrators. The Committee also devoted considerable attention to the country's critical situation with regard to prostitution and the alarming levels of this practice among girls and very young women. It emphasized the fact that procurers went unpunished, and regretted that the grave socio-economic conditions in which many women lived led them to become prostitutes. The Committee also expressed particular concern at the number of legal and administrative errors in cases of adoption, which perpetuated the undesirable international traffic in girls and boys.

22. The Committee expressed its serious concern at the situation of rural women, who constituted the majority of the country's female population and whose living conditions were characterized by a lack of primary health care, access to education and a high drop-out rate. In addition, women faced legal and cultural barriers that prevented them from owning property and were almost completely excluded from the decision-making process; there were also profound disparities in men's and women's wages, to the detriment of women.

Suggestions and recommendations

23. The Committee urges the State party to continue its initiatives with a view to updating its national legislation in order to make it compatible with the constitutional principle of equality and the articles of the Convention. In this regard, it recommends that the State party make special efforts to revise the Penal Code and related laws in the light of general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women. 1/

24. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the political and administrative aspects of the national mechanism (Office of the Secretary of State for Women) in accordance with article 7 of the Convention.

25. The Committee appreciates the State party's efforts to implement the quota system in decision-making bodies and recommends that that system be adopted and implemented in all possible areas and at all possible levels, including the public authorities, political parties, unions and other organizations of civil society, in accordance with the provisions of article 7 of the Convention.

26. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen and broaden its initiatives to extend bilingual education to all citizens, in particular women, and to combat the social, economic and cultural factors causing the high drop-out and illiteracy rates among women, in the light of the provisions of article 10 of the Convention.

27. The Committee urges the State party to fulfil its obligations with respect to all the rights set out in article 12 of the Convention and stresses the urgency with which it recommends that the State party take measures to deal with the high levels of maternal mortality and illegal abortions. It also recommends that the State party provide sufficient and adequate family planning services and information.

28. The Committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts to guarantee equality in land distribution and ownership and in all aspects of its exploitation, in accordance with articles 11, 14 and 16 of the Convention.

29. The Committee recommends the wide dissemination of the Convention among women, particularly among rural and indigenous women.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/47/38), chap. I.

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Fifteenth session
15 January-2 February 1996

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Hanna Beate SCHÖPP-SCHILLING (Germany)

Addendum

IV. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

B. Consideration of reports

2. Initial and second periodic reports

Paraguay

1. The Committee considered the initial and second periodic reports of Paraguay (CEDAW/C/PAR/1 and 2 and Add.1 and 2) at its 289th and 297th meetings, on 17 and 23 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.289 and 297). The Committee took note of the answers given orally to the wide range of questions and concerns raised during consideration of the report.

2. In introducing the combined report, the representative of Paraguay noted that since 1992 a number of important political changes had taken place in the country. She emphasized the adoption of a new Constitution and the election of a civilian Government. In 1992, the position of Secretary of State for Women was established.

3. The representative indicated that in the new Constitution the principle of equality had been adopted and the relevant international instruments had been ratified. This allowed the creation of a body of law on equality between women and men. However, disparities in equality in legislation still existed.

4. The representative gave details of several programmes that the Government, non-governmental organizations and women's organizations had been implementing. Despite gains made in women's education, 6 out of 10 illiterate persons in the country were women, mainly from rural areas, and the levels of school retention were very low, especially for girls. The country had one of the highest rates of maternal death in the Latin American region, with abortion being the second most common cause of maternal death.

5. The proportion of women heads of households was very high and those households tended to be among the poorest. There had been some improvements in the granting of loans to women for micro-enterprises, as well as for housing. While segregation of jobs and education was easing and stereotyping in educational materials was being examined, disparities in economic activity and remuneration between women and men were very high. Some measures had been introduced to penalize and prevent violence against women, to regulate prostitution and to provide education on AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

6. The representative pointed out that one of the most visible changes in the past years had been the participation of women in politics. Several political parties, as well as the Parliament and local authorities, were in the process of introducing quotas for women.

7. The representative stressed that her Government held the conviction that neither development nor democracy were possible without the participation of women.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

8. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the high-level representation and Paraguay's effort in submitting the report and the addenda promptly, which reflected an intention to comply with submission procedures, provide updated information and initiate a dialogue with the Committee that would enable better interpretation of the Convention. The Committee also noted the comprehensive and detailed nature of the oral presentation, which complemented the written reports and answered the questions raised by the experts.

9. Satisfaction was also expressed with the report's frankness, reflecting situations and problems in conflict with the articles of the Convention. The Committee highlighted the scale of the effort represented by submission of the report for a country embarking on a democratic process after a long dictatorship. It welcomed the fact that, apart from the Government, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions had also participated in drafting the report.

Factors obstructing implementation of the Convention

10. The Committee recognized that various factors were holding up implementation of the Convention. Particularly relevant were the country's limited economic capacities and its dependence on farm production, which had only very recently begun to be modernized; high rates of poverty and marginalization among the population; the institutional and cultural consequences of the prolonged dictatorship; and the existence of a very traditional and hierarchical society. Paraguay was currently going through a period of transition, where the new structures of democracy and the rule of law were still being defined, which led to difficulties in applying the policies promoted by the Convention.

Positive aspects

11. The Committee noted that the new Constitution enshrined the principle of equality between men and women, as well as reforms of the Labour and Electoral Codes.

12. The Committee also noted the Government's early recognition of the importance of women for the country's development and the creation of the Office of the Secretary of State for Women to coordinate official policies for that sector of the population.

13. The Committee further noted the importance attached by the Government to its commitment under the Beijing Platform for Action and, in particular, its initiative to adopt a gender approach in policies and programmes, as well as to heighten the awareness of administrative personnel in that connection.

14. The Committee noted the Government's recognition of the serious problem of violence against women, which had been declared a public health problem.

15. The Committee also noted the level of development of women's organizations and their commitment to the advancement of women.

16. The Committee further noted the initiatives and efforts of both non-governmental organizations and the Government to broaden the political participation of women and the proposal to establish a law on quotas and to oblige all political parties to establish a minimum number of women in their electoral lists.

Principal subjects of concern

17. The Committee was concerned that the country's legislation maintained discriminatory provisions in conflict with the constitutional principle of equality. Despite the progress made in certain codes, both civil and penal legislation needed major changes to incorporate the rights laid down in the Convention and those emanating from the Constitution.

18. The Committee was concerned at the limited mandate and resources of the Office of the Secretary of State for Women and its apparent lower ranking in the political and administrative hierarchy in relation to other ministries. In that

connection, the Committee expressed its surprise that the Secretary of State for Women should be excluded from meetings of the Cabinet of Ministers, which constituted a form of discrimination.

19. The Committee expressed great concern at the high level of easily preventable maternal mortality - one of the highest in the region - and of extremely unsafe abortions, especially among very young girls, as well as the high fertility rate and limited access to basic health and family planning services. It stressed that this situation was particularly serious among rural women, most of whom did not benefit from the right to health guaranteed by the Convention.

20. The Committee acknowledged the State party's initiatives to provide bilingual education but expressed its concern at the inadequacy of those initiatives, which posed a major obstacle to women's access to social and economic opportunities, since a large percentage of the female population spoke only Guaraní, the predominant aboriginal language. The high illiteracy and drop-out rates were considered major impediments to the advancement of women.

21. With regard to violence against women, the Committee expressed great concern at the extent of the problem and the inadequacy of legal and administrative measures to combat it, protect victims and punish the perpetrators. The Committee also devoted considerable attention to the country's critical situation with regard to prostitution and the alarming levels of this practice among girls and very young women. It emphasized the fact that procurers went unpunished and regretted that the grave socio-economic conditions in which many women lived led them to become prostitutes. The Committee also expressed particular concern at the number of legal and administrative errors in cases of adoption, which perpetuated the undesirable international traffic in girls and boys.

22. The Committee expressed its serious concern at the situation of rural women, who constituted the majority of the country's female population and whose living conditions were characterized by a lack of primary health care, limited access to education and a high drop-out rate. In addition, women faced legal and cultural barriers that prevented them from owning property and they were almost completely excluded from the decision-making process; there were also profound disparities between men's and women's wages, to the detriment of women.

Suggestions and recommendations

23. The Committee urged the State party to continue its initiatives with a view to updating its national legislation in order to make it compatible with the constitutional principle of equality and the articles of the Convention. In that regard, it recommended that the State party make special efforts to revise the Penal Code and related laws in the light of general recommendation 19 on violence against women. 1/

24. The Committee recommended that the State party strengthen the political status and the economic and administrative aspects of the national mechanism (Office of the Secretary of State for Women) in accordance with article 7 of the Convention.

25. The Committee appreciated the State party's efforts to implement the quota system in decision-making bodies and recommended that that system be adopted and implemented in all possible areas and at all possible levels, including by public authorities, political parties, unions and other organizations of civil society, in accordance with the provisions of article 7 of the Convention.

26. The Committee recommended that the State party strengthen and broaden its initiatives to extend bilingual education to all citizens, in particular women, and to combat the social, economic and cultural factors causing the high drop-out and illiteracy rates among women, in accordance with the provisions of article 10 of the Convention.

27. The Committee called upon the State party to fulfil its obligations with respect to all the rights set out in article 12 of the Convention. It stressed the urgency for the State party to take measures to deal with the high level of maternal mortality and illegal abortions and to consider reviewing the punitive measures of the law of abortion, in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action. It also recommended that the State party provide sufficient and adequate family planning services and information.

28. The Committee recommended that the State party increase its efforts to guarantee equality in land distribution and ownership and in all aspects of its productive use, in accordance with articles 11, 14 and 16 of the Convention.

29. The Committee recommended the wide dissemination of the Convention, primarily among women and in particular among rural and indigenous people.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/47/38), chap. I.

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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Hanna Beate SCHÖPP-SCHILLING (Germany)

Addendum

IV. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

B. Consideration of reports

1. Initial reports

Iceland

1. The Committee considered the combined initial and second periodic reports of Iceland (CEDAW/C/ICE/1-2) at its 290th and 291st meetings, on 18 and 24 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.290 and 291).

2. In introducing the report, the representative of Iceland informed the Committee that the original first report of 1987 had by mistake never been submitted and that the current initial and second report covered the period up to 31 December 1991. He proceeded to inform the Committee about legal changes and recent developments in the field of women's human rights that had occurred in his country since the submission of the report.

3. The representative pointed to various measures in education, including equal rights education in schools and legally mandated vocational training for

women. In order to eliminate discrimination, which still existed, an Equal Status Council and a Complaint Committee had been established. In 1994, a human rights section had been included in the Icelandic Constitution, including a reference to sex. A four-year plan on measures to obtain equal status between the sexes focused on action to promote equal status in the school system, in the labour market, in rural districts and with regard to social rights. The representative described measures taken to eliminate violence against women, including a shelter for victims, payment of damages to the victims of violence and the mobilization of men against violence.

4. The representative illustrated the important participation of women in public life, which had increased steadily since 1979. The President of the country had been a woman since 1980 and was also one of the first democratically elected women leaders in the world. In the last parliamentary elections, women won 25 per cent of all the seats in Parliament. A women's party existed; women's political representation at municipal level now reached about 30 per cent and in public commissions around 20 per cent.

5. The representative pointed out that discrimination was persistent in the field of employment. Women's participation in the formal economy was very high, but some gender differences existed in wages. The labour market was segregated to some extent. Unemployment affected women more than men. In order to change the wage system and achieve greater balance in family responsibilities, the Government was taking specific measures, including a revision of the act on maternity leave, which should enable men to better assume their caring roles. Municipal governments planned to expand childcare facilities. Women represented over 50 per cent of university graduates and this was reflected in the public sector in particular. Job evaluation was seen as an important factor for ensuring pay equity.

Concluding comments of the Committee

6. In concluding, the representative stated that the national report prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women, the debate on women's rights and the present report had helped his country to assess what had been achieved and what steps should be taken in the future.

Introduction

7. The Committee found the initial and second periodic reports of Iceland to be frank and welcomed the extensive oral introduction of the report, which supplemented in very large measure what should have been included in the report. It should have been submitted earlier in 1995 as an amendment. The Committee also welcomed the answers to questions posed during consideration of the report.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

8. The Committee was of the opinion that the fact that the Convention and other international treaties had not been incorporated into the domestic laws and so could not be enforced in the country adversely affected full implementation of the Convention.

Positive aspects

9. The Committee welcomed the inclusion in the Constitution in 1994 of a provision guaranteeing enjoyment of human rights without prejudice to gender and was impressed with the work being done by the Equal Status Council.

10. The Committee commended the emphasis placed by the Government on the eradication of violence and the establishment of a Committee to ascertain the extent and causes of violence in the home as well as the allocation of an emergency ward to rape victims in the city hospital. The Committee also commended the passage of a law making the State Treasury responsible for the payment of damages to the victims of violence as well as the formation of a Men's Committee aimed at sensitizing men to the problems resulting from violent behaviour.

11. The Committee was gratified about plans by the Government of Iceland to report periodically to the public on the Platform for Action.

12. The Committee viewed with appreciation the establishment of a Children's Ombudsperson to promote and safeguard the rights of children.

13. The Committee noted with satisfaction the fact that women now represented 50 per cent of university graduates.

Principal subjects of concern

14. The Committee noted the lack of statistics in the report and Iceland's failure to comply with general recommendation 9, but noted with appreciation the additional data supplied during the response to the Committee's questions.

15. The Committee was very concerned about the wide differential in the wages earned by women, which were considerably lower than those of men, and that this could be explained only on the grounds of sex.

16. Further concern was expressed over the fact that a significantly higher proportion of men held administrative positions in both the public and private sectors, while women surpassed men in jobs requiring no vocational training.

17. The Committee viewed with concern the lack of adequate information on certain articles of the Convention, particularly article 12, which addresses the health care of women.

18. The Committee regretted that rural women frequently had fewer opportunities for employment outside the home than men or those living in urban areas.

Suggestions and recommendations

19. The Committee recommended that in subsequent periodic reports the Government of Iceland report fully on each article of the Convention.

20. The Committee recommended that the Government take steps to ensure that the Convention be made enforceable in the courts of Iceland.

21. The Committee recommended that in future statistics disaggregated by gender be included in the periodic reports and that the Government of Iceland comply with general recommendation 9.

22. The Committee recommended that urgent steps be taken to ensure that women earned the same and comparable wages as men in all areas of employment.

23. The Committee suggested that measures be taken in future to ensure that women were appointed to administrative positions and to ensure leadership roles in all fields of employment, for example, by adopting affirmative action programmes.

24. The Committee suggested that future reports reflect analyses of the impact of job evaluation exercises.

25. The Committee noted the intention of the Government of Iceland to achieve greater balance in family responsibilities by a revision of the act on maternity leave, but suggested nevertheless that mechanisms be devised to ensure men's participation in child care and domestic duties apart from maternity leave, due regard being paid to the longer hours of work undertaken by men.

26. The Committee recommended that steps be taken to correct the imbalance between men and women in part-time employment, having regard to the fact that the percentage of women undertaking part-time employment was much higher than that of men.

27. The Committee recommended that steps be taken to educate judicial personnel about the Convention.

28. The Committee considered that studies on the evaluation of unpaid work should be undertaken as regards both men and women despite the earlier initiative taken.

29. The Committee recommended that the position of rural women be improved in all areas, including opportunities for employment outside the home.

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Draft report

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Addendum

IV. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

B. Consideration of reports

1. Initial reports

Iceland

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2. In introducing the report, the representative of Iceland informed the Committee that the original first report of 1987 had by mistake never been submitted and that the current initial and second report covered the period up to 31 December 1991. He proceeded to inform the Committee about legal changes and recent developments in the field of women's human rights that had occurred in his country since the submission of the report.

3. The representative pointed to various measures in education, including equal rights education in schools and legally mandated vocational training for women. In order to eliminate discrimination, which still existed, an Equal

Status Council and a Complaint Committee had been established. In 1994, a human rights section had been included in the Icelandic Constitution, including a reference to sex. A four-year plan on measures to obtain equal status between the sexes focused on action to promote equal status in the school system, in the labour market, in rural districts and with regard to social rights. The representative described measures taken to eliminate violence against women, including a shelter for victims, payment of damages to the victims of violence and the mobilization of men against violence.

4. The representative illustrated the important participation of women in public life, which had increased steadily since 1979. Since 1980, a woman has been President of the country and was also one of the first democratically elected women leaders in the world. In the last parliamentary elections, women won 25 per cent of all the seats in Parliament. A women's party existed; women's political representation at the municipal level now reached about 30 per cent and in public commissions about 20 per cent.

5. The representative pointed out that discrimination was persistent in the field of employment. Women's participation in the formal economy was very high, but some gender differences existed in wages. The labour market was segregated to some extent. Unemployment affected women more than men. In order to change the wage system and achieve greater balance in family responsibilities, the Government was taking specific measures, including a revision of the act on maternity leave, which should enable men to better assume their caring roles. Municipal governments planned to expand child-care facilities. Women represented more than 50 per cent of university graduates and this was reflected in the public sector in particular. Job evaluation was seen as an important factor for ensuring pay equity.

6. In concluding, the representative stated that the national report prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women, the debate on women's rights and the present report had helped his country to assess what had been achieved and what steps should be taken in the future.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

7. The Committee welcomed the high-level representation and commended the Government for the frank report and the extensive oral introduction, which supplemented in very large measure the report. The Committee also welcomed the answers to questions posed during consideration of the report.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

8. While the Committee commended the Government of Iceland for amending the Constitution and enacting the Equal Status Act, it was of the opinion that if the Convention had not thereby been incorporated fully into the domestic law of Iceland, then the implementation of the principles of the Convention was adversely affected.

Positive aspects

9. The Committee welcomed the inclusion in the Constitution in 1994 of a provision guaranteeing the enjoyment of human rights without prejudice to gender and was impressed with the work being done by the Equal Status Council.

10. The Committee welcomed the fact that in the procedures adopted by the Complaints Committee, the burden of proof of an allegation of sexual discrimination had been shifted from the complainant to the alleged perpetrator.

11. The Committee commended the emphasis placed by the Government on the eradication of violence and the establishment of a committee to ascertain the extent and causes of violence in the home as well as the provision of an emergency ward to rape victims in the city hospital. The Committee also commended the passage of a law making the State Treasury responsible for the payment of damages to the victims of violence as well as the formation of a Men's Committee aimed at sensitizing men to the problems resulting from violent behaviour.

12. The Committee was gratified about plans by the Government of Iceland to report periodically to the public on the Platform for Action.

13. The Committee viewed with appreciation the establishment of a Children's Ombudsperson to promote and safeguard the rights of children, boys and girls, as contained in the Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

14. The Committee noted with satisfaction the advancement of women in education in general as expressed by the fact that women now represented 50 per cent of university graduates and that a women's study centre had been established at the university.

Principal subjects of concern

15. The Committee noted the lack of statistics in the report and Iceland's failure to comply with general recommendation 9, but noted with appreciation the additional data supplied during the response to the Committee's questions.

16. The Committee was very concerned about the wide differential in the wages of women, and men, in both the public and private sectors and the fact that this could be explained only on the grounds of gender.

17. Further concern was expressed about the fact that, while women surpassed men in jobs requiring no vocational training, at the same time a significantly higher proportion of men held administrative positions in both the public and private sectors.

18. The Committee noted with concern that the cost of contraction was not covered under the public health system.

19. The Committee viewed with concern the lack of adequate information on certain articles of the Convention, particularly article 12, which addresses the rights of women and States Parties' obligations with respect to health care.

The Committee noted the lack of any gender perspective on matters pertaining to women's health, in particular regarding mental health, as well as medical research.

20. The Committee regretted that rural women frequently had fewer opportunities for employment outside the home than did men or those women living in urban areas.

Suggestions and recommendations

21. The Committee recommends that in subsequent periodic reports the Government of Iceland report fully on each article of the Convention and the general recommendations.

22. The Committee recommends that, in future, statistics disaggregated by sex be included in the periodic reports and that the Government of Iceland comply with general recommendation 9.

23. The Committee recommends that the Government take steps to ensure that the principles of the Convention are fully incorporated into Icelandic law and are enforceable in its courts. In particular, the Committee encourages the Government to generate sex-disaggregated data of health needs and services, so as to assist the development of a gender-sensitive health policy.

24. In order to facilitate the enforceability of the Convention in the Icelandic courts, the Committee recommends that steps be taken to introduce a programme of information dissemination and training about the Convention to the judiciary.

25. The Committee urges the Government to continue its determined efforts in the area of equal pay for work of equal value in order to achieve pay equity in all areas of employment in accordance with general recommendation 13. It further requests that future reports contain information on this issue in dealing with the results of the current job evaluation.

26. The Committee suggests that measures be taken as early as possible, for example by adopting affirmative action programmes, to ensure that women are appointed to decision-making positions and to assume leadership roles in all fields of employment.

27. The Committee suggests that future reports reflect analyses of the impact of job evaluation exercises.

28. The Committee feels that revising the law on maternity leave is not enough to achieve a more balanced sharing of family responsibilities by men and women. It therefore recommends that the Government develop other means to increase men's participation in household tasks and child care, bearing in mind the nature of both the paid work done by men and that done by women inside and outside the home.

29. At the same time, the Government should intensify its development of activities to combat traditional gender stereotypes through educational and awareness programmes targeting children and adults.

30. The Committee recommends that the Government take steps to investigate the imbalance between men and women in part-time employment, as this imbalance can be indicative of indirect discrimination of women in the labour market.

31. The Committee recommends that steps be taken to educate judicial personnel about the Convention.

32. The Committee considers that studies on the evaluation of unpaid work should be undertaken as regards both men and women despite the earlier initiative taken.

33. The Committee recommends that the position of rural women be improved in all areas, including opportunities for employment outside the home.

34. The Committee urges the Government to further intensify its information programmes among migrant women particularly those that pertain to the rights of women in Iceland. In order to ensure the protection of migrant women, it further encourages the Government to continue the provision of adequate health and counselling services and monitoring of the increasing number of intermarriages between Icelandic men and migrant women which the Government is undertaking.

35. The Committee recommends an amendment to the Equal Status Act to ensure representation of at least 40 per cent of each sex in public bodies.

36. The Committee recommends that, in view of the successfully completed projects on equal rights education in various schools, equal rights as well as human rights education should be made mandatory in the Icelandic school curriculum.

37. The Committee recommends that the Government include the results of women studies in curriculum reform as well as in the education and training of teachers in order to facilitate the elimination of cultural stereotypes.

38. The Committee urges the Government to adopt a public health approach to the issue of violence against women, and facilitate the reporting of violence also through primary health-care providers.

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Fifteenth session
15 January-2 February 1996

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Hanna Beate SCHÖPP-SCHILLING (Germany)

Addendum

IV. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

B. Consideration of reports

1. Initial reports

Ethiopia

1. The Committee considered the combined initial, second and third periodic reports of Ethiopia (CEDAW/C/ETH/1-3 and Add.1) at its 292nd and 293rd meetings, on 19 January, and at its 299th meeting, on 24 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.292, 293 and 299).

2. In introducing the reports, the representative of Ethiopia said that the political situation of her country had not always been conducive to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. At the time of ratification, about 60 per cent of the national budget was being expended on the war effort. The war was accompanied by drought and famine that had cost millions of lives. The change in Government in 1991 brought a transition from war to peace, from dictatorship to democracy and from a command economy to a more market-oriented economy. The

new Government inherited a situation aggravated by a social crisis, with millions of displaced persons and refugees, unemployment and the destruction of the little social service infrastructure the country had had. In 1994 a new Constitution was adopted and in 1995 a federal Government formed. The representative indicated that the recent political changes were having a positive impact on the welfare of Ethiopian women. One important step had been the adoption of the National Women's Policy.

3. The representative pointed out that the situation of women in Ethiopia had been particularly difficult because of the country's economic backwardness and women's disadvantaged access to opportunities. However, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was committed to the advancement of women. A manifestation of that commitment was the setting up of the Women's Affairs Office within the Prime Minister's Office. Several measures had been adopted to address gender disparities. The new Constitution reflected a strong commitment to the principles of the Convention. About 3 per cent of the seats in Parliament were held by women. Women were well represented at community level and even better at local level, because the electorate had found that women had been less corrupt and had given due care to those in need.

4. The representative stated further that Ethiopia had accepted the Beijing Platform for Action without reservation and was focusing on poverty reduction as the primary critical area of concern. Poverty constituted the root cause of the many problems faced by women. The Women's Affairs Office planned to compile gender-specific statistics to monitor the impact of policies and programmes on girls and women. Apart from the existing political will and commitment of the Government, the achievement of the goals of the national policy for women required substantial financial and material resources. The representative said that a lot was expected from the international donor community.

Concluding comments of the Committee

Introduction

5. The Committee expressed appreciation for the frank and honest report and the equally frank presentation. The fact that the Minister for Women's Affairs herself introduced the report was indicative of the commitment to the advancement of women in the country. The Committee also appreciated that Ethiopia had ratified the Convention as well as several other international human rights instruments and had accepted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action without reservation.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

6. The Committee identified as major factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention: (a) the poverty of the country; (b) the deep-rooted customs and traditions; (c) illiteracy; (d) demographic growth; and (e) unemployment. These were compounded by the existence of different kinds of laws, namely, international and national as well as a variety of customary and religious ones.

Positive aspects

7. Appreciation was expressed for the political will in adopting a national policy for the advancement of women as well as for the integration of a gender perspective in other policies, including the creation of women's focal points in national, regional and local political decision-making bodies.

8. The Committee commended the Government for the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995.

9. The Committee welcomed the high percentage of women at local government level.

10. The Committee welcomed the affirmative action efforts from women at the university level.

Principal subjects of concern

11. The Committee noted with concern that neither the combined report nor the addendum followed the Committee's general guidelines, which had created obstacles to constructive dialogue between the Committee and the State party.

12. The Committee felt that if the areas of competence of the mechanisms set up for changing the status of women were not clearly defined and if proper financing was not secured, initiatives could be blocked.

13. While commending the translation of the Convention into Amharic, the Committee was nevertheless concerned about the dissemination of the Convention in view of the number of other languages that were also spoken in the country.

14. In addition to the cultural obstacles, the Committee expressed concern over still existing discriminatory laws at the national level and at persistent discrimination in the family.

15. Major concern was expressed by the Committee over the issue of widespread female genital mutilation and the incidence of violence against women and girls. Regarding female genital mutilation, while recognizing that it was a tradition deeply rooted in custom that could not be eliminated by law, much could be done through general and specific education of the women involved in practising it or asking for it.

16. The Committee was concerned about the prevalence of prostitution and male promiscuity, which increased the spread of AIDS. Early marriage was also a great concern to the Committee.

17. Concern was also expressed about the discriminatory law that made Ethiopian women who married foreigners lose their nationality.

18. The Committee noted the lack of visibility of women at the higher decision-making levels and was doubtful about the effectiveness of programmes if adopted without the involvement and concurrence of the majority of women concerned. It expressed its doubts over the efficiency of any measures to eradicate poverty as

long as the percentage of women in Government remained as low as it was at present.

19. The Committee expressed concern over the high level of illiteracy, the high school drop-out rate, sexual harassment of girls at school and the lack of vocational training programmes.

Suggestions and recommendations

20. The Committee suggested that subsequent reports follow the Committee's general guideline for reporting.

21. When resources were available, the translation of the Convention must be in as many local languages as possible so that it benefited many people.

22. The Committee suggested that a review of all existing customary laws in ethnic groups be carried out in order to evaluate them as to their substance and their compatibility with international conventions and national legislation.

23. Awareness programmes and legal measures must be put in place urgently to abolish the practice of female genital mutilation and all other such practices that discriminated against women. Those who performed female genital mutilation must be helped to find other sources of income.

24. Rehabilitation and skill training programmes must be provided for women as an alternative source of income to women prostitutes.

25. Women must be encouraged to participate at all levels of decision-making.

26. Measures, including temporal special measures and programmes, must be adopted to give girls and women equal access to quality education and training.

27. The age of marriage must be the same for boys and girls.

28. The nationality law for married men and women must be revised to conform with the Convention.

29. Family life education, including family planning, should be expanded and improved.

30. There must be an intensive programme to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS. Infected women and men must be guaranteed equal enjoyment of their human rights.

31. The Government must seek international support for poverty alleviation and educational programmes.

32. Every effort must be made to attain a stable and peaceful environment in order to reconstruct the country and create the conditions necessary for the sustainable development and integration of women.

33. In order to assist the Government in implementing its policies for women, the Committee deems it advisable to request a subsequent report, on an exceptional basis, to be submitted by 1 September 1997 for discussion at the seventeenth session of the Committee, in 1998.

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
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15 January-2 February 1996

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3. The representative pointed out that the situation of women in Ethiopia had been particularly difficult because of the country's economic backwardness and women's disadvantaged access to opportunities. She emphasized that the Government was committed to the advancement of women. A manifestation of that commitment was the setting up of the Women's Affairs Office within the Prime Minister's Office. Several measures had been adopted to address gender disparities. The new Constitution reflected a strong commitment to the principles of the Convention. About 3 per cent of the seats in Parliament were held by women. Women were increasingly represented at the local level and at the community level.

4. The representative stated further that Ethiopia had adopted the Beijing Platform for Action without reservation and was focusing on poverty reduction as the primary critical area of concern. Poverty constituted the root cause of the many problems faced by women. The Women's Affairs Office planned to compile gender-specific statistics to monitor the impact of policies and programmes on girls and women. Apart from the existing political will and commitment of the Government, the achievement of the goals of the national policy for women required substantial financial and material resources. The representative said that a lot was expected from the international donor community.

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12. The Committee felt that if the areas of competence of the mechanisms set up for changing the status of women were not clearly defined and if proper financing was not secured, initiatives could be blocked.

13. While commending the translation of the Convention into Amharic, the Committee was nevertheless concerned about the insufficient dissemination of the Convention in view of the number of other languages that were also spoken in the country.

14. In addition to the deep-rooted cultural obstacles, the Committee was concerned with still existing discriminatory laws at the national level and at persistent discrimination in the family.

15. Major concern was expressed by the Committee about the issue of widespread female genital mutilation and the incidence of violence against women and girls and the insufficiency of measures to eradicate it.

16. The Committee was concerned about the prevalence of prostitution and male promiscuity, which increased the spread of AIDS. Early marriage was also a great concern to the Committee.

17. The Committee noted with concern low representation of women at the higher decision-making levels and was doubtful about the effectiveness of programmes formulated and adopted with the involvement of women at those levels. It expressed its doubts about the efficiency of any measures to eradicate poverty as long as the percentage of women in Government remained as low as it was at present.

18. The Committee expressed concern about the high level of illiteracy, the high school drop-out rate, sexual harassment of girls at school and the lack of vocational training programmes.

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22. Awareness programmes and legal measures must be put in place urgently to abolish the practice of female genital mutilation and all other such practices that discriminate against women. Those who perform female genital mutilation must be helped to find other sources of income.

23. Training programmes should be put in place, aimed at rehabilitating prostitutes and equipping them and other women with skills, which will provide an alternative source of income.

24. The Committee recommends that there be an increase in the number of women in decision-making positions in public administration and that programmes be developed to encourage women to take decision-making positions.

25. Measures, including temporary special measures and programmes, must be adopted to give girls and women equal access to quality education and training.

26. The age of marriage must be the same for boys and girls.

27. The Committee encourages the Government to ensure access by women to primary health services, particularly reproductive health, family life education and family planning.

28. There must be an intensive programme to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS. Infected women and men must be guaranteed equal enjoyment of their human rights.

29. The Government must seek international support for poverty alleviation and educational programmes and to assist in the implementation of the above recommendations 22, 24, 26 and 28.

30. Every effort must be made to attain a stable and peaceful environment in order to reconstruct the country and create the conditions necessary for the sustainable development and integration of women.